



Education Watch

Enhancing Flexibility & Accountability ■ Leaving No Child Behind

U.S. House Education & the Workforce Committee ■ John Boehner, Chairman
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Harkin: Schools and Students Can Wait for Education Reform

Congressional negotiators have pledged to send a bipartisan education bill to the President's desk this month. After 36 years of disappointing results, schools are set for new flexibility and funding and parents are ready to be empowered with new educational choices for their children. But at least one legislator says parents, students and children can wait a little longer, to buy extra time for pointless partisan bickering.

"I don't see anything wrong with coming back in January if we have to," Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) told the *Associated Press* on Thursday, in reference to finishing the education bill. Harkin proposes to stall the bipartisan bill in a partisan effort to add funds. But a Democratic source told *Roll Call* this week that "three-fourths of our [Caucus] is not willing to go that far." (Preston, *Roll Call*, December 6, 2001)

There's plenty wrong with waiting until January. To begin with, about \$4.7 billion in new education funds for states and public schools, which was added to the House education appropriations bill, contingent on enactment this year of the bipartisan reforms. As *Education Daily* reported December 6th, if the reform bill is not completed by early next week, "[the Education Department] would lose about \$4.7 billion in increases for various school programs, including sizeable boosts in Title I, special education grants, and Pell Grants."

Ironically, the House education funding bill includes a \$1.4 billion increase for special education – a bigger increase than Harkin proposed. America's children have waited 36 years for reform. They shouldn't have to wait another month. Our children deserve a reform bill this year.

Message of the Day

America's children have waited too long for education reform.

- ❑ *Congress must send a bipartisan education bill to the President before the end of the year -- and the clock is ticking.*
- ❑ *Many states and local schools are facing a budget crunch and should be allowed to begin 2002 counting on a significant increase in both flexibility and funding.*
- ❑ *There's a reading crisis among America's children and President Bush has a bipartisan education reform package to help improve reading scores -- especially for disadvantaged children.*

DAILY EDUCATION FACTS

- Every year that the public education system fails to address the reading needs of America's students, almost 1.4 million children in fourth grade alone fall behind. That's a number of children 26 times greater than the population of Sarasota, Florida (53,000), and the population of the states of Maine or Idaho (each approximately 1.2 million).
- For nearly a quarter century, Democrats controlled both chambers of Congress and did virtually nothing to move the federal government toward paying its fair share of the costs of special education. Since Republicans captured Congress in 1994, however, federal funding for special education has increased by 172 percent.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I don't see anything wrong with coming back in January if we have to." -- Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), on his willingness to let the year-long education reform process in Congress slip into 2002 and perhaps beyond (Greg Toppo, Associated Press, December 7, 2001)